

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #0283/01 0570211
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 260211Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3352
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 8151
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//

UNCLAS SEOUL 000283

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/K, EAP/PD, INR/EAP/K AND INR/IL/P
TREASURY FOR OASIA/WINGLE
USDOC FOR 4430/IEP/OPB/EAP/WGOLICKE
STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAS/ITP
STATE PASS DOL/ILAB SUDHA HALEY
STATE PASS USTR FOR IVES/WEISEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KS](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: PRESS BULLETIN - February 25, 2009

Opinions/Editorials

- [1. After All, the U.S. Is the Problem](#)
(JoongAng Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 26)
- [2. How Clinton Stole Korean Hearts](#)
(Chosun Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)
- [3. N. Korea Will Have to Pay for Missile Test](#)
(Chosun Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)
- [4. Breaking the Cycle of Brinkmanship](#)
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 25, 2009, Page 27)
- [5. North Korea's Real Intentions behind Announcing Plans to Launch 'Satellite'](#)
(Hankook Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 39)
- [6. North Korea's Missile Launch Will Only Increase Suffering of Its Citizens](#)
(JoongAng Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 26)
- [7. A Damning Verdict for the Government](#)
(Chosun Ilbo, February 24 2009, Page 27)
- [8. Pres. Lee Cannot Repeat Mistakes of 1st Year](#)
(Dong-a Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)
- [9. An Evolution for Lee](#)
(JoongAng Daily, February 25, 2009, Page 10)

Features

- [10. One-Third of Koreans Say Lee Doing a Good Job](#)
(Chosun Ilbo, February 23, 2009, Front Page)
- [11. Economic Crisis Helps Lee in Poll](#)
(JoongAng Ilbo, February 23, 2009, Page 6)
- [12. Survey Says Lee Is Not Faring Well in His First Year](#) (Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 23, 2009, Front Page)
- [13. Power Elite Shifts to 'Conservative Technocrats'](#)
(Chosun Ilbo, February 24, 2009, Page 8)

Top Headlines

Chosun Ilbo
ROK's Top 30 Conglomerates Agree to Slash Entry-level Wages for College Graduates to Increase Hiring

JoongAng Ilbo
Service Industry Is Key to Job Creation

Dong-a Ilbo
Ruling GNP Seeks to Review the Recognition of "1989 Dongeui

University Incident" - where Seven Police Officers were Killed while Trying to Suppress Student Demonstrations
- as "Democracy Movement"

Hankook Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun, All TVs
North Korea Says It Plans "Rocket Launch"

Hankyoreh Shinmun

Chief Justice of Seoul Central District Court Allegedly Pressured Judges Examining Cases Related to Last Year's Candlelight Rallies to Issue Rulings Unfavorable to Those Arrested

International Developments

1. North Korea's Committee of Space Technology, in a Feb. 24 statement, claimed that full-fledged preparations are underway at the Donghae launch site in Hwadae-gun, North Hamgyong Province to launch the Kwangmyongsong-2, an experimental communications satellite, by means of a delivery rocket called Unha-2. Though it mentioned no date, the statement suggests that North Korea will test-fire a long-range Taepodong-2 missile as planned. Back in August 1998, the North test-fired a missile which it claimed was the satellite Kwangmyongsong-1. (All)

2. In order to maximize the effect of a missile launch for both domestic and global purposes, ROK pundits speculated that the North might attempt to test a missile on March 8, when the North holds parliamentary elections. They went on to conjecture that the launch might come around the time of the G-20 Financial Summit to be held in London in early April, when the leaders of the ROK and the U.S. are slated to meet, or the birthday of the late North Korea leader, Kim Il-sung (April 15). (JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankook, Segye, Seoul)

Media Analysis

North Korea - Preparations for a Missile Launch

Most of the ROK media gave top front-page play to yesterday's claim by North Korea's Committee of Space Technology that full-fledged preparations are underway at the Donghae launch site in Hwadae-gun, North Hamgyong Province to launch the Kwangmyongsong-2, an experimental communications satellite, by means of a delivery rocket called Unha-2. Though it mentioned no date, the ROK media observed that the statement suggests that North Korea will test-fire a long-range Taepodong-2 missile as planned, considering that the North, back in August 1998, test-fired a missile which it claimed was the satellite Kwangmyongsong-1.

Citing local pundits, the ROK media speculated that, in order to maximize the effect of a missile launch for both domestic and global purposes, North Korea might attempt to test a missile on March 8, when the North holds parliamentary elections. Alternatively, the media conjectured, the launch could come around the time of the G-20 Financial Summit to be held in London in early April when the leaders of the ROK and the U.S. are slated to meet, or the birthday of the late North Korean leader, Kim Il-sung (April 15).

Most of the ROK media noted that this is the first time that Pyongyang has given prior notice of its test-launch, whether it is for a missile or a satellite. Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized: "This North Korean move seems aimed at getting the attention of the international community. North Korea might have calculated that its open saber-rattling might increase its leverage in future denuclearization or normalization negotiations. However, that is a huge miscalculation. North Korea's missile launch would either toughen existing UN sanctions or lead the international community to impose fresh sanctions against the North." Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo headlined its editorial: "North Korea's Missile Launch Will Only Increase the Pain and Suffering of the North Korean People." Moderate Hankook Ilbo's editorial commented: "The North's announcement of plans to 'launch a satellite' may be a signal that it has no intention of escalating tensions further. As Secretary Clinton pointed out, North Korea is creating tensions to unite its people during its leadership crisis, including the succession problem. Many analysts believe that North Korea may be preparing a 'space show' to demonstrate its goal of becoming a 'prosperous and great country' ahead of the nomination of

a successor to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il through the upcoming parliamentary elections in March and the plenary session in April."

More on Secretary Clinton's Visit to Seoul

Conservative Chosun Ilbo carried an op-ed by Senior Reporter Kang In-sun, which observed that during this visit Secretary Clinton devoted her time and energy to winning the hearts of the Korean public. The newspaper added: "The Bush Administration spent huge sums of money and devoted a large number of people to diplomatic efforts to improve America's image, but it was unable to quell anti-American sentiment. By using her popularity and abilities as a politician, however, Secretary Clinton turned around the situation via a single trip through Asia. She gained the valuable diplomatic asset of 'favorable feelings' in a short period of time and at a low cost."

Global Economic Crisis

In a commentary titled "After All, the U.S. Is the Problem," right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo's Editorial Writer Kim Jong-su wrote: "U.S. President Barack Obama has missed a golden opportunity to pull the world out of the current economic quagmire. Of course, the current crisis is too serious for the U.S. alone to deal with. However, if this (economic stimulus) measure had cleaned up the troublesome factors of the U.S. economy, which are the cause of the current crisis, it would have at least eased the uncertainty and anxiety sweeping across the world. The Obama Administration, however, failed to clean house. Since there is no sign from the epicenter of the crisis that the explosion has ended, uncertainty and anxiety are still lingering on."

Opinions/Editorials

After All, the U.S. Is the Problem

(JoongAng Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 26)

By Editorial Writer Kim Jong-soo

U.S. President Barack Obama has missed a golden opportunity to pull the world out of the current economic quagmire. Of course, the current crisis is too serious for the U.S. alone to deal with. However, if this (economic stimulus) measure had cleaned up the troublesome factors of the U.S. economy, which are the causes of the economic crisis, it would have at least eased uncertainty and anxiety sweeping across the world. The Obama Administration, however, failed to clean house. Since there is no sign from the epicenter of the crisis that the explosion has ended, uncertainty and anxiety is still lingering.

Obama Misses an Opportunity to Revive the Economy.

Since the economic stimulus plan failed to draw bipartisan cooperation, it lost momentum from the beginning. In addition, because a large part of the plan is set to take effect starting next year, it is less effective in the short term. Tax cuts, which immediately boost consumption, can only be implemented after April. They are not enough to revive the sinking economy. Furthermore, since the administration included the "Buy American" provision in the stimulus bill in response to concerns raised by Republicans, the (potential) impact (which the stimulus bill will have) on boosting the world economy has been reduced to half.

The financial bailout plan is even more disappointing. The best way to overcome the financial crisis is to resolve the bad assets of financial institutions in a short period of time. This is what Sweden and the ROK did during their respective financial crisis. The shortcut is to make a firm decision to liquidate insolvent financial institutions to the extent that the market can state affirmatively that it is now clean - whether it means to create a bad bank to buy up troubled assets or to nationalize insolvent banks. Of course, this may be burdensome as it requires a massive outlay of public funds, but experience tells us that it would be less costly in the end than several small bailouts. However, the plan set out by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner fell far short of these expectations. He liked neither the bad bank nor nationalization plans. This is why ambiguous civilian-government investment funds have been created. In addition, Secretary Geithner's plan does not specify how to resolve troubled assets. Naturally, the plan disappointed the market, drove down stock

prices, and shook up international foreign exchange markets.

While the USG is dragging its feet over financial restructuring, shares of underperforming financial institutions suffered a big blow, and a rumor is going around that Citibank and AIG, the U.S.'s biggest bank and insurance company, may be nationalized. Rather than carrying out financial restructuring in a determined way, the USG has lost its focus and is at a loss as to what to do, which is amplifying anxiety in international financial markets. Thus far, whenever other nations faced a financial crisis, the U.S., through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has forced nations to restructure their financial institutions, but now when the U.S. itself is at a crisis, it is not following its own prescription. It is, of course, true that the current financial crisis facing the U.S. is very different from previous crises in other nations. The current one is more complicated and much bigger in scale. Still, there is no difference in the solution to this crisis. The U.S. is just fearful of the political burden and social consequences that the solution will entail.

We Can Survive Only If the U.S. Does Well

To our dismay, the reality is that the world cannot emerge from the economic crisis if the U.S. does not perform well. Iceland has already gone bankrupt and countries in Eastern Europe are in danger of state bankruptcy. However, they are no match for the crisis in America. Under these circumstances, small, open economies like us (the ROK) are bound to fare worse. In fact, if the U.S. had properly cleaned its house, our country would not have had to suffer this much. We will speed up corporate restructuring and boost our economy. However, it would be of no use unless the U.S. economy revives.

How Clinton Stole Korean Hearts (Chosun Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)

By senior reporter Kang In-sun

The Korean side was male-dominated, including Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, during last week's talks with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Seated on the U.S. side were Clinton and U.S. Ambassador to Korea Kathleen Stephens. It made one wish Yu had taken the bold decision to place at least one female Korean diplomat on his side. Cheong Wa Dae and the Prime Minister's Office were just as insensitive to that fact, dispatching a group of male government officials to meet Clinton.

After doing the rounds at Cheong Wa Dae, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Clinton sped over to Ewha Womans University. She came alive standing before more than 2,000 students. "People who think hard about our future come to the same conclusion, that women and others on society's margins must be afforded the right to fully participate in society, not only because it is morally right, but because it is necessary to strengthen our security and prosperity," Clinton said.

After delivering her speech, Clinton connected with the students. She talked about her own experiences in response to the questions given by students and said, "I feel more like an advice columnist than Secretary of State today." She recalled a night when her daughter was a baby. "She was just crying and crying, and it was the worst feeling when you're a new mother and you can't get your baby to stop crying and you don't know what's causing it. And so I was rocking her in the middle of the night and I said to her, 'Look, you've never been a baby before, and I've never been a mother before. We just have to figure this out together,' and that's what we're still doing. Every new experience, we're just figuring it out together."

The students did not ask her about her duties as Secretary of State or about her experiences running for presidency. They asked her about the everyday problems we all experience in dating, marriage, having children and working. And Clinton did not give lofty answers. She said, "I've loved and been loved, and all the rest is background music." She said she reminded herself every day of "the discipline of gratitude." She added, "No matter how difficult a day can be or a problem may be, find something to be grateful for every

day."

Clinton struck a chord with the students by telling them that she has gotten to where she is today by undergoing the same trials and tribulations as they did. The students went wild. The lecture, which started with a speech on the North Korean nuclear dilemma, ended in a friendly atmosphere. After covering Clinton's itinerary from early in the morning, I felt that this was the highlight of her visit, rather than official meetings with the president and foreign minister. Clinton probably had this type of situation in mind when she said that diplomacy also requires a political sense.

This may be what broad diplomacy should be all about. That's because winning over the hearts of the public of friendly and allied countries will probably become a substantial diplomatic asset in the future. Diplomats who place utmost importance on protocol think diplomacy is all about sitting behind closed doors, engaging in formal conversations. But when a government needs to make decisions on diplomatic and security issues that will determine the future of the nation, public support is a decisive factor. During such times, diplomacy does not take place within the confines of the government.

A government should ideally gain the support of not only its own public but of other countries as well.

This is exactly what Clinton did during her visit to Korea. She spent just the necessary amount of time shaking hands with important figures and taking commemorative photos. She devoted the rest of her time and energy to winning the hearts of the Korean public.

The Bush Administration spent huge sums of money and devoted a large number of people to diplomatic efforts to improve America's image, but it was unable to quell anti-American sentiment. By using her popularity and abilities as a politician, however, Secretary Clinton turned around the situation via a single trip through Asia. She gained the valuable diplomatic asset of 'favorable feelings' in a short period of time and at a low cost."

Clinton is said to have planned this type of event by pushing her staff at the State Department to come up with "creative" ideas. After her departure, has the government taken a moment to analyze her style of diplomacy, which transcends traditional formats? If it hasn't, while passing off the university lecture as simply a "women's event," then it should start to consider just what it is Clinton gained from her visit.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

1N. Korea Will Have to Pay for Missile Test
(Chosun Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)

The North's Korean Committee of Space Technology claimed Tuesday it was preparing to launch an experimental communications satellite named Kwangmyongsong-2 by means of delivery rocket Unha-2 at a launch site in Hwadae located in northeastern Korea. In 1998, when it tested a Taepodong-1 missile, the North also claimed to have launched a satellite. Now, some 22 days after South Korean and U.S. intelligence agencies first detected movements, North Korea is, in any case, admitting that it is planning some kind of launch.

Missile or satellite, this is the first time that North Korea has given advance notice of such a move, apparently to get the international community, including the U.S., to pay attention. Pyongyang may believe that a display of its military power could lead to advantages during Six-Party negotiations and in talks to normalize relations with the U.S. But that is a huge mistake. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who visited South Korea last week, warned the North to halt all activities related to its missiles. Clinton reconfirmed UN Resolution 1718, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on Oct. 14, 2006 after North Korea's nuclear test. The resolution, adopted by around 30 UN member countries, blocks exports of not only military goods but also of luxury items to the communist country. But its impact has slackened as time has passed by. A missile test would either tighten existing UN restrictions or prompt its members to come up with new ones.

During her Asian tour, Clinton mentioned the uncertainties posed by the generational transfer of power in North Korea and urged the North to engage in dialogue with South Korea. Clinton also hinted at the possibility of Pyongyang-Washington talks. The impending missile launch could be construed as a response to Clinton's comments, and it only reminds the Obama Administration of what Christopher Hill, the former chief U.S. negotiator to the Six-Party Talks, said when he called North Korea an expert at killing momentum by calling "time out" every time progress is made. This type of behavior is not helping.

A missile test would also pose obstacles for participating countries in the Six-Party Talks in giving aid to the North. The World Food Programme estimated North Korea's grain output to a total of 4.21 million tons, leading to a shortage of 836,000 tons. As was the case last year, the situation is expected to get worse unless the North receives South Korean rice and fertilizer aid. In civilian contact with the South in Shenyang, China early this month, North Korea appealed to South Korea to provide fertilizer and farming equipment. But who would be willing to step up and help North Korea if the regime is preoccupied with launching a missile even as its people worry where their next meal will come from?

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Breaking the Cycle of Brinkmanship
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 25, 2009, Page 27)

North Korea announced officially yesterday that it is preparing to launch a long-range missile. It said it is launching the communication satellite Kwangmyongsong-2 using the rocket Unha-2, but that is essentially the same as launching one of its long-range Taepodong missiles. North Korea said its August 1998 launch of a Taepodong missile was really the launch of the "communications satellite Kwangmyongsong-1." Repeated warnings from South Korea and the U.S. have had no effect on its current missile launch preparations.

The North seems to be thinking that it has more to gain than lose by firing a missile. It might be thinking that it will gain more leverage to put pressure on the new U.S. Administration, as well as strengthen its position at the Six-Party Talks and in relations to the U.S. It might be trying to show off its missile technology, a potential source of foreign currency, and to shore up internal support ahead of the upcoming Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) meeting. Indeed, the missile launch of 1998 came immediately prior to the same kind of plenary session of the SPA.

The North Korean government's calculations, however, are no more than a misjudgment of the situation. Firing a missile will, for starters, lead to international sanctions. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718, adopted unanimously in October 2006 immediately following North Korea's test of a nuclear device, states that Pyongyang must "suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program." A missile launch would also increase the North's international isolation as the opinion of the nations involved in the Six-Party Talks turns against the North. It is also highly probable that the Obama Administration's process of reexamining American policy towards North Korea would lose momentum. It would have a big price to pay internationally, even if it does score a few points on the home front, in terms of handing the ruling elite a rationale to unify the people.

Relevant countries should work hard to resume the Six-Party Talks in order to stop the missile launch. U.S. Special Envoy Stephen Bosworth especially needs to get busy. The Obama Administration has said it is going to work harder on North Korea, and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said the issue of North Korean missiles is going to be part of negotiations with Pyongyang. Bosworth should be able to use the missile issue as a point of departure for new U.S.-North Korean dialogue. Pyongyang will also need to be convinced not to pursue a missile launch by South Korea and China, and one way of achieving that would be to send special envoys.

The North has enjoyed some of the desired effects from this kind of brinkmanship before, but in the end it always made relevant

countries distrust it all the more. It is time to put an end to that cycle. Pyongyang should stop the missile gambling and cooperate on resuming the Six-Party Talks.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

North Korea's Real Intentions behind Announcing Plans to Launch 'Satellite'
(Hankook Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 39)

North Korea announced that it is planning to launch a satellite, which will show the North's capability to launch a long-distance missile. North Korea's Committee of Space Technology said yesterday, "Full-fledged preparations are underway at the Donghae launch site in Hwadae-gun, North Hamgyong Province to launch the Kwangmyongson-2, an experimental communications satellite, by means of a delivery rocket called Unha-2." The Committee maintained that the North's science technology will pave the way for the country to become an economic power. However, the U.S. and the ROK see the satellite launch as a long-missile test that has been banned under U.N Security Council Resolution. Thus, this would throw the Korean Peninsula into turmoil over how to address the North's announced missile launch.

This is the first time that North Korea has given prior notice of its planned launch, whether it is a satellite or a missile. The North made an announcement four days after the launch of the Kwangmyongson-1 in 1998, and kept silent about its failed Taepodong-2 missile in 2006. Given this, this time it seems that the North has remedied technical defects and is very confident about its success. This move can be seen as a provocative approach which ignores warnings against launching a missile and may (have the effect of) derailing peace within the Korean Peninsula.

Accordingly, the neighboring countries' attempt to fend off the North's missile launch is seen as futile. The possibility of dispatching an envoy from China is being talked about but this effort is unlikely to pay off. There is less of a possibility to deter the North if it was prompted to go ahead with the missile launch due to Secretary's Clinton's remark on the North's leadership crisis, in addition to her speech holding the North responsible for raising tensions in the region.

But the North's announcement of its plans to launch a satellite may be a signal that it has no intention on continuously escalating tension. As Secretary Clinton noted, North Korea is heightening tensions to unify its people amidst a leadership crisis over the succession issue. Many analysts view that the North may be preparing a "space show" to demonstrate its goal of becoming a 'prosperous and great country' ahead of naming a successor to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il during the Supreme People's Assembly election in March and the plenary session in April.

Therefore, we should make all effort to take thorough countermeasures against the North's attempts to ratchet up tension through a missile launch as it has in the past, by test-firing mid-and-short range missiles in the East Sea and West Sea. If we keep overemphasizing the threat of a long-range missile launch by the North, that most likely cannot be averted, it will only fuel regional tensions.

North Korea's Missile Launch Will Only Increase Suffering of Its Citizens
(JoongAng Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 26)

North Korea has officially announced its plan to test-fire a missile. On February 24, it stated that it is preparing to shoot its Kwangmyongsong-1 satellite atop its Eunha-2 rocket. Although the missile is disguised as a satellite, it is evident that the communist state is preparing a missile launch. The missile that the North is planning to fire is known to be a "Taepodong-2" capable of reaching the U.S. mainland. It is the missile that was test-fired in July 2006 but plunged into the East Sea about 40 seconds after takeoff. The North, which was in a sharp confrontation with the U.S. at that time, officially said that what was test-fired was a

missile and threatened the U.S., saying that the North was now in possession of a "nuclear deterrent" against the U.S. That the North is disguising the same missile under the names of "Eunha-2" or "Kwangmyongsong-1" is a deceiving tactic for negotiation purposes with the new Obama Administration.

The ROK, the U.S. and Japan warned the North several times that a missile test will not only cloud the prospects for the Six-Party Talks but will also considerably undermine peace in Northeast Asia. China and Russia have expressed concern about Pyongyang's missile development activities, and in 2006, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution banning North Korea from undertaking missile tests. A missile launch will likely lead to international sanctions. In the end, only the suffering of North Korean residents, who repeatedly have had to endure (the deprivations of the) "Arduous March," will be aggravated. For its own sake also, North Korea must stop playing the missile game right away.

A Damning Verdict for the Government
(Chosun Ilbo, February 24 2009, Page 27)

President Lee Myung-bak marks his first year in office on Wednesday. Lee's efforts to restore a sense of identity and order in Korean society after 10 years of leftwing rule, were cited as his greatest achievement by the 20 people credited with contributing the most to the creation of this administration. Other achievements they cited were the administration's principled position in difficult times such as mass protests and the Yongsan fire, and effectively dealing with the economic crisis. But they said Lee failed to understand and unite the public, making mistakes in government due to a lack of experience, and committing blunders in the appointment of key officials.

A Gallup poll marking the first anniversary of the Lee Administration tells a different story. A long list of options was put before respondents, but 75 percent either felt the president had achieved nothing or they did not know what his achievements might be. Regarding a sense of identity and order, two changes that president's key confidants cite as his greatest achievement, only 28.2 percent of the public agreed. The Lee Administration's failure to understand the public could not be more glaringly illustrated.

The economy was another area where the administration's view differed noticeably from the public view. Ruling party officials said that even though the results of the efforts are not evident yet, the government is dealing effectively with the global economic crisis and the seeds of hope are budding. But only 22.7 percent of Koreans felt the president was doing a good job in dealing with economic problems, and 57.8 percent believed he was doing a bad job. Some 19.5 percent did not know or declined to answer. The public was not shy about expressing its disappointment toward the first year performance of the CEO-turned president, who was elected based on his economic savvy.

Approval ratings gathered by other pollsters were not that much different from the Gallup results. This is the last year that the government can implement policies without being limited by political factors. What needs to be done must be done now. If the government misses this opportunity, then it will fail in implementing its goals. Major elections are lined up in 2010, starting with local elections in May next year.

The various polls conducted around the first anniversary of this administration are de facto mid-term assessments. The public has spoken and will base its attitude on the government's response to this feedback. To listen properly to the people's voice, the president and his so-called advisers must take a long, hard look at themselves in the mirror to see just how much their faces have changed during the past year.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Pres. Lee Cannot Repeat Mistakes of 1st Year
(Dong-a Ilbo, February 25, 2009, Page 27)

President Lee Myung-bak was elected on his pledge to be an "economy president." In his inauguration speech, he promised to make the country a better place to live, develop the economy, unite society, strengthen national security, and lay the groundwork for reunification of the Korean Peninsula. With these pledges, he declared 2008 the starting year for the advancement of the Republic of Korea. Accordingly, Koreans pinned high hopes on him. The first year of the administration, however, fell far short of expectations. Though factors such as the global economic crisis and staunch resistance from the opposition hampered his agenda, President Lee cannot escape blame for revealing lack of ability to manage state affairs. In a word, the people are disappointed at his performance.

The people no longer want him to deliver on his overambitious pledges of raising annual economic growth to seven percent, per capita income to 40,000 U.S. dollars, and the Korean economy to rank seventh in the world within 10 years. What Koreans do want is for the economy not to deteriorate further. Though the economic crisis was triggered by the U.S. financial sector, the Korean government cannot put the blame on external factors for the economic downturn. The specter of massive unemployment, steep drop in investments, and instability of the domestic financial market is looming over Korea.

It is urgent that the parliament pass bills, such as those on deregulation, separation of finance and industry capital, and lift cross-shareholding restrictions. They are aimed at revving up investment and boosting competitiveness. Yet the government remains powerless, only relying on the National Assembly. Corporate restructuring has been delayed and companies and households still suffer from liquidity shortages. Though the Lee administration says it wants to reduce red tape, it has failed to get rid of malicious regulations that hinder the smooth flow of the market economy.

Public sector reform has made no significant progress, either. Of 305 state-run organizations, only 25 have been affected and consolidated into 11 public corporations. The pledge to turn the government into a capable organization that does its job well has long dissipated. State organizations are at odds with each other and are busy delegating responsibilities to each other, while creating committees the government once pledged to eliminate.

President Lee has stressed the need to restore law and order as his 11th priority among 100 state tasks. Few agree that law and order is taking hold in the country, however.

Police have been frequently attacked by anti-American and pro-North Korea forces and failed to take proper action against illegal protests. When the country last year was gripped by candlelight vigil protests against the resumption of U.S. beef imports, President Lee disappointed his supporters by betraying his sentimental character. He said he went to the hill at the back of the presidential office to reflect on the situation and sang "Morning Dew," a popular song among pro-democracy advocates. In dealing with the Jan. 20 deadly clash between police and squatters that killed six people in Seoul's Yongsan district, he showed opportunistic behavior by allowing the Seoul police chief to resign though police did nothing wrong in the incident.

Controversy over improper personnel management has plagued previous administrations. The incumbent administration's appointments, however, have been particularly riddled with problems. Even if (we consider) the narrow pool of talent stemming from the conservative party's failure to take power for a decade, President Lee went overboard by unduly favoring dignitaries and his close confidants over those with experience and capabilities in filling government posts. This has resulted in a host of Cabinet members who lack competence and abilities to handle state affairs.

To be fair, the Lee Administration did make certain achievements in its first year. It restored bilateral relations with the United States, which had been in tatters over the past decade, to a strong alliance and strengthened cooperation with other allies such as Japan. Though inter-Korean relations remain frozen due to President Lee's hard-line stance toward the North, Seoul's stance deserves praise for sticking to principles.

Marking the first anniversary of President Lee's term, the presidential office said the government has been on two tracks in its first year: overcoming the economic crisis and preparing for further progress and prosperity. It also cited major achievements in allaying worries over another financial crisis through currency swap agreements with major economies; improving relations with neighboring countries including the United States, Japan, and China; easing regulations to revive the economy; paving the way to find new growth engines; and streamlining state organizations. This self-assessment, however, is a far cry from the people's perception. The gap in assessment will further deteriorate public confidence in the government.

The inauguration of a new administration inevitably brings conflict, social discord and mistakes. Korea, however, can no longer afford more mistakes and mismanagement. President Lee must reflect on what he did wrong and learn lessons from his mistakes to make a fresh start. His administration's fate hinges on its second-year performance.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

An Evolution for Lee
(JoongAng Daily, February 25, 2009, Page 10)

Today, President Lee Myung-bak embarks on his second year of a five-year tenure. A year ago, his inauguration sparked a flame of hope for a social reformation. We nurtured hopes for a president of principles, promise and common sense; a diligent, efficient government; reasonable and tolerant political power; a productive, inclusive legislature engaging opposition parties; and the public in acknowledgment of government authority.

But the moment of disillusionment came too soon and the flame has died out. The president proved easily swayed, his appointments disorganized, the ruling party at an abyss and the opposition overly reactive. His small collection of much-touted reform plans are still mired in legislative swamps. His people are caught in a hemorrhaging economy while his political supporters and opponents remain obstinate and constantly bicker over their differences.

With the dawn of a second year in office, the president faces a new test. His administration has a heavy workload waiting. It needs to reboot the task force to combat economic crisis, reinvent policies to restructure government, public entities and education as well as completely overhaul the legislative structure and relations. The president should be the bedrock of this reform structure because he is at the core of the state system. President Lee must be the first to change. He should put forward a new leadership on the basis of the lessons he learned from his failures in the past year. He needs to return to his promises of common sense and principles. His policies should be in line with what the public wants. He needs to look beyond his group of acolytes to recruit new brains and talent into his administration. The president's trials mostly derived from his failure to keep his word. He needs to uphold his promise to work side by side with his former presidential rival Park Geun-hye and mend the divide in the ruling party. A fractured majority party cannot wield power in the legislature.

President Lee tried to maintain discipline and order in handling the public dispute following the disastrous breakup of a demonstration at a redevelopment site in Yongsan. But he nevertheless gave in to opposition demands and his nominee for national police chief had to withdraw.

On top of reason and principles, President Lee also must learn to communicate and be more tolerant. He needs to seek wisdom from senior politicians and opponents. He must engage the opposition through discussions and cajolery. He also needs to reach out to North Korea and restore dialogue.

As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth this year, we wish to see a creative and transformative evolution of the president's leadership.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is

identical to the Korean version.

Features

One-Third of Koreans Say Lee Doing a Good Job
(Chosun Ilbo, February 23, 2009, Front Page)

By Reporter Hong Young-rim

Only one-third of Koreans feel Lee Myung-bak is doing well as we approach the first anniversary of his presidency this Wednesday. In a Gallup poll for the Chosun Ilbo on Saturday, 33.5 percent said Lee is doing well, but 54.6 percent felt he was doing badly, 6.6 percent said so-so, and 5.3 percent had no opinion.

In a Gallup poll right after Lee's inauguration in late February last year, his support rating was 52 percent, but this plunged to below 30 percent in May when the nation was swept by protests over U.S. beef imports, remaining fixed for the next seven months. It climbed to 32.1 in December.

Asked to rate Lee's performance from 0 to 100, with 100 meaning excellent, the respondents gave him an average of 50.2. Some 37.9 percent of the respondents allotted points between 51 and 100, 27.4 percent gave 50 points, and 34 percent of the total gave points between 0 and 49.

The nationwide poll of 1,020 adults age 19 or over had a error margin of a hefty 3.1 percent and a 95 percent confidence level.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Economic Crisis Helps Lee in Poll
(JoongAng Ilbo, February 23, 2009, Page 6)
By Reporters Shin Chang-un and Ser Myo-ja

For the Lee Myung-bak Administration to succeed, regaining the public's trust is a must, according to results from a recent poll.

The JoongAng Ilbo and the East Asia Institute commissioned Hankook Research to survey 1,000 adults nationwide on Feb. 9 and 10 to mark the first anniversary of Lee's presidential inauguration. Some 32.2 percent of those polled are satisfied with Lee's performance, and 29.4 percent said they trust the government.

EAI analysts said the deepening economic crisis prevents Lee's approval rating from plummeting further due to a "rally 'round the flag" effect. They say this explains the increased popular support for the president.

Of those polled, 47.4 percent said the Lee Administration is doing well coping with the economic crisis; 52.6 percent said it is not. Of those who said they do not trust the administration, 90.6 percent said the government is failing in its economic efforts, indicating that the public's distrust is directly linked to the people's skepticism of government policies.

The poll also showed that public expectations for the government to revive the economy have not faded. More than 60 percent said economy-related tasks should be the top priority of the administration. Some 41.6 percent said they want the government to reinforce welfare policy while 57.7 percent said they want the government to concentrate on economic growth.

Public concern has grown in areas beyond the economy. In February of last year, 6.3 percent said the Lee administration's priority should be uniting the nation. That figure has grown to 13.9 percent this year. Those who wanted political reform to be prioritized were 3.6 percent of the total last year. The figure has now grown to 7.4 percent.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Survey Says Lee Is Not Faring Well in His First Year

(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 23, 2009, Front Page)

By Senior Reporter Sung Han-yong and Reporter Lee Hwa-joo

A majority would not vote for Lee again if given the choice today and 46 pct say the best thing he has done in his first year is "nothing"

One third of all Korean voters who chose Lee Myung-bak in the last presidential election would not vote for him again if the election were held today.

In an opinion survey performed Saturday by Research Plus at the request of The Hankyoreh on the occasion of the first anniversary of Lee's inauguration, 57.9 percent of respondents said they would not vote for Lee if the election were held today, far more than the 28.9 percent who said they would.

Of those who indicated they had voted for Lee in the presidential election held December 2007, only 48.7 percent said they would vote for him again. 33.4 percent said they would not vote for him again, while 17.9 percent of those who said they voted for him in 2007 did not answer the question.

Lee is constitutionally limited to a single five-year term.

A whopping 57.6 percent of respondents said Lee is performing poorly as president, and only 34.1 percent approve of how he is running the government. Regarding the appointments Lee has made in his first year in office, 57.8 percent disapprove of his appointees, far more than the 29.7 percent who think he is making the right choices.

Those surveyed were allowed to fill in the blank when it came to giving an answer about the best thing Lee has done in his first year, but 46 percent said "nothing" and 36.3 percent did not respond at all. Of the 17.7 percent who did respond, 6.4 percent said he has done well with the economy, 3.9 percent said he has "run the government well," and 2 percent said he has done well in the area of North Korea policy.

In a similar question about the worst things Lee has done as president, 24 percent gave answers related to economic matters, such as a "lack of effort in restoring the economy," unemployment and price stabilization. "Not trying hard enough to listen to the Korean public" was the answer of 11.6 percent of respondents while another 6.1 percent said he ignores policies that would help low- and middle-income families.

Respondents were also asked about standing policies and issues and how they think they have fared in the first year of Lee's year in office, as compared with government policies and operations one year before his inauguration. Of those surveyed, 66.9 percent said inter-Korean relations have worsened, 23.1 percent say they remain the same, and 5.2 percent said they have improved. Regarding irregular workers, 53.3 percent said conditions for irregular workers have worsened, 28.7 percent said they remain the same, and 5.7 percent said they have improved. Regarding education, 50.2 percent said the "burden of extracurricular tutoring" has increased, 30.7 percent said it remains the same, and 7.3 percent said it has decreased. Regarding discord between members of Korean society, 60.5 percent said there has been an increase in social discord, 25.5 percent said nothing has changed, and 9.7 percent said there is less social discord.

There was no major difference of opinion on the subject of social welfare benefits for the poor, with 29.2 percent saying there has been improvement, 33.9 percent saying the level of benefits remains about the same, and 29.5 percent saying it has deteriorated.

One thousand Koreans over the age of 19 participated in the telephone survey, which had a margin of error of 13.1 percent of a 95 percent confidence level. Survey results can be seen in their entirety, in Korean, at www.hani.co.kr.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

By Reporter Hwang Dae-jin

Over the past year since the Lee Myung-bak Administration took power, the power elite, which is leading the Korean society, has been shifting from former student activists-turned-politicians known as the "386 generation" to "conservative technocrats."

Prof. Jang Hoon of ChungAng University said, "If the key group of the Roh Moo-hyun Administration was a combination of left-wing intellectuals and the 386-generation power elite, the power elite of the Lee Myung-bak Administration is a combination of pro-growth advocates in their 60s and intellectual technocrats in their 50s. The key groups in the Lee Administration's power elite seem to be less united."

If we compare the Roh and Lee Administrations at the beginning of their respective second year, the average age of Lee's power elite groups has increased. The average age of Cabinet members increased from 57.9 to 61.9, and that of presidential secretaries from 48.5 to 51.1.

During the Roh Administration, many presidential secretaries at Cheong Wa Dae were in their 30s. But the key members of the current presidential secretaries are conservative technocrats in their early 50s.

Prof. Park Gil-sung of Korea University said, "Non-mainstreamer elite led the Roh Administration. But typical mainstreamer elite are the key members of the Lee Administration."

Among 122 ministers, vice ministers and presidential secretaries in the Lee administration, the number of those from the Seoul metropolitan area decreased from 39, when its first Cabinet was formed last year, to 33 this year. But those from Gyeongsang provincial regions increased from 37 to 41, or 33.6 percent. There was no change in the number of those from Jeolla regions (19, or 15.6 percent). Those from Chungcheong regions increased from 16 to 19, and those from Gangwon and Jeju also increased from 7 to 9.

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Stephens